

CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

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- 1 1. A method for accessing information, the method comprising:
- 2 sending a query to a first set of users accessible by a first user, the query
- 3 including information relevant to a request for information; and
- 4 receiving a response to the query from a second user, the second user a
- 5 member of the first set of users, the response including information responsive to the
- 6 query, the information accessible in a public portion of a system.

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- 1 2. The method of claim 1 further comprising:
- 2 providing the response from information accessible in a public portion of a
- 3 system controlled at least in part by the second user.

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- 1 3. The method of claim 1 further comprising:
- 2 forwarding the query to a second set of users, each user of the second set of
- 3 users accessible by the second user;
- 4 receiving a response from a third user, the third user a member of the second
- 5 set of users, the response including information responsive to the query from a public
- 6 portion of a system; and
- 7 forwarding the response to the first user.

- 1 3² 4. The method of claim 3 further comprising:

2 adding the third user to the first set of users.

1 ~~4~~ 5. The method of claim ~~4~~ ³ wherein:

2 the second set of users dynamically formed such that the second set of users
3 has no intersection with the first set of users.

1 ~~5~~ 6. The method of claim ~~5~~ ⁴ wherein:

2 The query includes a list of users known to have had the query sent to each user
3 of the list of users.

1 ~~6~~ 7. The method of claim ~~6~~ ³ wherein:

2 the query includes a timestamp indicating when the query was originated and
3 further comprising discarding queries received at a time later than the timestamp plus a
4 predetermined length of time.

1 8. A system comprising:

2 a processor;

3 a control hub coupled to the processor;

4 a network interface coupled to the control hub;

5 a memory coupled to the processor;

6 a first logic block configured to receive a query;

7 a second logic block configured to transmit a query; and

8 a third logic block configured to check a public file system for information
9 responsive to a query.

1 9. The system of claim 8 further comprising:
2 a fourth logic block configured to interface with a user; and
3 a fifth logic block configured to maintain a group of users and corresponding
4 addresses.

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1 10. A system comprising:
2 means for sending a query to a first set of users accessible by a first user, the
3 query including information relevant to a request for information; and
4 means for receiving a response to the query from a second user, the second
5 user a member of the first set of users, the response including information responsive
6 to the query, the information accessible in a public portion of a system.

1 11. The system of claim 10 further comprising:
2 means for providing the response from information accessible in a public portion
3 of a system controlled at least in part by the second user.

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1 12. The system of claim 11 further comprising:
2 means for Forwarding the query to a second set of users, each user of the
3 second set of users accessible by the second user;

4 means for Receiving a response from a third user, the third user a member of
 5 the second set of users, the response including information responsive to the query
 6 from a public portion of a system; and
 7 the means for providing including Means for Forwarding the response from the
 8 third user to the first user.

1 ~~9~~ 13. The system of claim ~~12~~ further comprising:

2 means for adding the third user to the first set of users.

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1 14. A machine-readable medium embodying instructions for execution by a
 2 processor, the instructions, when executed by the processor, causing the processor to
 3 perform a method, the method comprising:
 4 sending a query to a first set of users accessible by a first user, the query
 5 including information relevant to a request for information; and
 6 receiving a response to the query from a second user, the second user a
 7 member of the first set of users, the response including information responsive to the
 8 query, the information accessible in a public portion of a system.

1 15. The machine-readable medium of claim 14 further embodying instructions for
2 execution by a processor, the instructions, when executed by the processor, causing
3 the processor to perform a method, the method further comprising:
4 providing the response from information accessible in a public portion of a
5 system controlled at least in part by the second user.

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1 16. The machine-readable medium of claim 15 further embodying instructions for
2 execution by a processor, the instructions, when executed by the processor, causing
3 the processor to perform a method, the method further comprising:
4 forwarding the query to a second set of users, each user of the second set of
5 users accessible by the second user;
6 receiving a response from a third user, the third user a member of the second
7 set of users, the response including information responsive to the query from a public
8 portion of a system; and
9 forwarding the response to the first user.

1 17. The machine-readable medium of claim 16 further embodying instructions for
2 execution by a processor, the instructions, when executed by the processor, causing
3 the processor to perform a method, the method further comprising:
4 adding the third user to the first set of users.

1 18. The machine-readable medium of claim 17 further embodying instructions for
2 execution by a processor, the instructions, when executed by the processor, causing
3 the processor to perform a method, wherein:

4 the second set of users dynamically formed such that the second set of users
5 has no intersection with the first set of users; and

6 the query includes a list of users known to have had the query sent to each user
7 of the list of users.

1 19. The machine-readable medium of claim 17 further embodying instructions for
2 execution by a processor, the instructions, when executed by the processor, causing
3 the processor to perform a method, wherein:

4 the query includes a timestamp indicating when the query was originated and
5 further comprising discarding queries received at a time later than the timestamp plus a
6 predetermined length of time.

1 20. A method of providing information from a second user comprising:

2 Receiving a query from a first user, the query including information relevant to a
3 request for information; and

4 Sending a response to the query, the response including information responsive
5 to the query, the information accessible in a public portion of a system.

1 21. The method of claim 20 further comprising
2 providing the response from information accessible in a public portion of a first
3 system controlled at least in part by the second user.

1 22. The method of claim 20 further comprising:
2 forwarding the query to a set of users, each user of the set of users accessible
3 by the second user;
4 receiving a response from a third user, the third user a member of the set of
5 users, the response including information responsive to the query from a public portion
6 of a second system; and
7 forwarding the response to the first user.

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